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GOSOLANCA

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION IX

75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

AUG 19 1996

Honorable Sam Farr
U.S. House of Representatives
House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Farr:

Thank you for your inquiry of July 25, 1996, on behalf of your constituent, Ed Tobin, regarding the Clear Creek Management Area, San Benito County. In response to your letter, my staff has advised me of the following:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) draft and final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the Clear Creek Management Area. We expressed serious objections to the proposed alternative in the draft EIS because it would pose human health risks in the area from exposure to asbestos, a known human carcinogen, as well as continued impacts to water quality, soils, and unique biological resources. We also requested that the final EIS include a significant amount of additional information. Upon review of the final EIS, we expressed serious objections to the revised proposed alternative, which appears to have the potential to be even more environmentally damaging than the preferred alternative proposed in the draft EIS.

Your letter indicates that it is Mr. Tobin's understanding that, because the asbestos is naturally occurring, it is harmless to humans. Asbestos, which comprises a group of naturally-occurring minerals, is a known human carcinogen. In fact, studies have shown that indirect exposure to asbestos from nearby mining activities (i.e., for people living near mines) has led to increased cancer deaths.

Also according to your letter, Mr. Tobin suggests that EPA is refusing to allow any project to proceed because of the presence of asbestos in the area. EPA's role in reviewing and commenting on EISs, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, is strictly advisory. However, we do not believe that the Clear Creek Management Area is an appropriate location for off-road vehicle recreation because the activity results in degradation of air and water quality, posing human health risks,

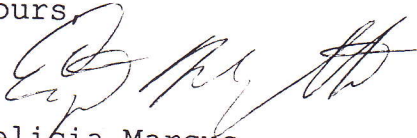
as well as impacts to soils and unique biological resources.

Representatives from our two agencies will be meeting in the near future to discuss, and hopefully resolve, the many issues related to management of the Clear Creek Management Area. Our June 3, 1996 comment letter on BLM's final EIS is enclosed should you wish additional details concerning EPA's position on the issues in question.

You have indicated that Mr. Tobin would like to know what BLM's position is with regard to this situation and that he would like a copy of the management plan for Clear Creek. I recommend that Mr. Tobin contact the BLM directly to ascertain their position and to request copies of pertinent documents such as the final EIS.

I trust this information will be helpful in responding to your constituent's concerns. If we can be of further assistance, please call my Congressional Liaison Officer, Catherine Roberts, at (415) 744-1560.

Yours


for Felicia Marcus
Regional Administrator

Enclosure